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*Official Records*

39th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 30 October 2007, 3 p.m.
New York

*President*: Mr. Kerim ..... (The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Agenda item 43**

**Report of the Economic and Social Council**

**Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/62/3)**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/283)**

**Note by the Secretary-General (A/62/277)**

**The President**: The General Assembly will now consider agenda item 43, entitled "Report of the Economic and Social Council".

In connection with this item, I would like to recall to the members of the General Assembly that, pursuant to Assembly resolution 58/316 of 1 July 2004, the Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided at its 3rd plenary meeting, on 21 September 2007, to consider agenda item 43 in its entirety in plenary, on the understanding that the administrative, programme and budgetary aspects should be dealt with by the Fifth Committee.

At the same meeting, the Assembly took note of the clarification that, in implementing resolution 58/316 to consider item 43 in its entirety in the plenary, the relevant parts of chapter I of the report that are under agenda items already allocated to the Main Committees will be considered by the Committee concerned for final action by the General Assembly.

I give the floor to the President of the Economic and Social Council, Mr. Dalius Čekuolis, to introduce the report of the Economic and Social Council.

**Mr. Čekuolis** (Lithuania), President of the Economic and Social Council: I have the honour to introduce the 2007 report of the Economic and Social Council.

This year's substantive session was an important landmark in the work of the Council. It laid the foundation for a renewed Economic and Social Council. By implementing the vision of the 2005 World Summit, this session opened new avenues for the future of the Council, particularly the annual ministerial review and the launch of the biennial Development Cooperation Forum.

I would like to briefly highlight some of the key outcomes of this session and then focus on some future steps.

This year's special high-level meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, World Trade Organization and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) initiated preparations for the Follow-up of the International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha, in the second half of 2008. That meeting represents the centrepiece of our dialogue on the global partnership for development.

The first annual ministerial review exceeded all expectations. It provided focus and concrete content to the discussion of policies and means required to improve and accelerate implementation of Millennium Development Goals 1 and 8, the eradication of poverty and hunger through the global partnership for development. I hope the Assembly will draw upon the

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work of the Council for its specific meeting focused on development, as decided in Assembly resolution 60/265.

The high point of the review was, in my view, the national voluntary presentations by the ministers of six developing countries — Bangladesh, Barbados, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Ethiopia and Ghana — which became an occasion for peer review, knowledge sharing and information exchange. From them, five key policy messages emerged. First, national development strategies are working, but not at the pace required. We need to accelerate and scale-up the implementation process. Secondly, the global partnership should be made more effective in all its dimensions. Thirdly, the global economic environment should be made pro-development and pro-poor. Fourthly, monitoring the implementation of commitments and accountability should be strengthened. Finally, emerging threats that hamper efforts to realize these goals, such as climate change and desertification, should be addressed urgently.

The high number of countries that have volunteered to be reviewed by the Council next year, including many developed countries, highlights the Council's role as a convener and the central forum for reviewing global development goals. Next year's presentations should be a further step forward as the Council will be undertaking a review of countries at different stages of development and different perspectives.

We also had a very stimulating dialogue at the launch of the biennial Development Cooperation Forum, a unique global platform in which all actors engaged in a dialogue on key policy issues affecting development cooperation, which included issues such as the quantity, quality and impact of aid and aid coordination. The task of the 2008 Forum will be to offer strong analysis and provide guidance on how development cooperation can best support the internationally agreed development goals.

The ministerial declaration, adopted by consensus, sends an important message that the international community is united in dealing with the obstacles and challenges in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly Goal 1.

The practical dimension of partnerships was illustrated at the first-ever Innovation Fair, where a dozen United Nations system entities, several non-governmental organizations and private sector entities showcased their products and projects for the reduction of hunger, malnutrition and poverty. Innovation Fairs are expected to serve as the hub for promoting and catalysing tangible, multi-stakeholder partnerships for implementing the United Nations development agenda.

The deliberations on the theme of strengthening efforts at all levels to promote pro-poor sustained economic growth, including through equitable macroeconomic policies, highlighted five key policy messages. First, the link between economic growth and poverty reduction is complex and there is a need for further study, including on their relation to equity. Secondly, there is a need for broad-based macroeconomic policies, which should be formulated in the framework of a national development strategy. Thirdly, some national policies have spill-over effects on other countries, while external conditions affect national economies. Fourthly, there is a need to increase the voice and participation of developing countries in international decision-making. Finally, international regimes that had been developed without much participation by developing countries need to be reviewed and reassessed.

The Council's coordination segment showed that the 2006 ministerial declaration has mobilized the United Nations system and Governments in making employment and decent work a central objective of their policies and activities. That augurs well for strengthening linkages between the high-level and coordination segments of the Council in order to translate its normative work into practical implementation. During the humanitarian affairs segment, the Council gave guidance on how to strengthen the coordination of the humanitarian system of the United Nations. It highlighted the need for the capacity-building of national, local and regional organizations; broader partnerships among humanitarian organizations; and the need to improve humanitarian stand-by capacities, including with the private sector.

Many proposed that the Economic and Social Council should become a more active body by convening ad hoc meetings on humanitarian emergencies. I believe that this collective thinking should be put into action in line with General Assembly resolution 61/16.

The Council's work on the operational activities for development was of special significance. A number of themes emerged in the discussions on the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review, which have informed the Assembly's debates over the past days. These include the importance of national ownership and leadership of United Nations operational activities; the need for increased, more stable and predictable core and non-core resources; the significance of support by the United Nations system in countries in transition from relief to development; and better coordination with peacebuilding efforts. Also, the need for greater coordination and coherence of the United Nations system at the country level was highlighted.

In the general segment, the Council focused on, among other issues, consolidating and coordinating the work of its subsidiary bodies. The Council's role in this area is becoming all the more important as we proceed to implement the United Nations development agenda in a unified and effective way.

Many other outcomes of the Council are of key relevance to the work of the Assembly, such as those on human rights, social development and gender mainstreaming, to mention only a few. They will, I am sure, help the Second and Third Committees in their work.

Allow me to share with you what I see as the next issues for the Council where we need to mobilize our efforts to achieve the goals of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1). The 2005 World Summit rightly highlighted the linkages between peace, development and human rights and the need for multidimensional strategies. Nine out of the ten countries with the lowest human development indicators have experienced conflict at some point since 1990. Those countries are clearly very far from achieving the targets and goals set out in the United Nations development agenda.

The new role assigned to the Economic and Social Council to conduct annual ministerial reviews will, hopefully, strengthen its capacity to contribute to the area of peacebuilding. That will give the Council the opportunity to continually assess how conflict is affecting the implementation of the development agenda and to review and share lessons learned on how development strategies can help forestall violent conflict. The biennial high-level Development Cooperation Forum can also provide a unique opportunity for the Council to examine how development cooperation can best support countries seeking to emerge from conflict.

The agreement to extend the Council's Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on Guinea-Bissau and Haiti is a clear recognition of the useful contribution that the Council can make to the long-term development of such countries. The lessons learned from those Groups could contribute to enriching the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. I will work with members of the Council's Bureau in further strengthening the ties between the relevant bodies.

The Council has unique Charter-based tasks aimed at promoting stronger, coordinated responses from the United Nations system and other partners to humanitarian crises. It can also help to ensure equal focus on investing in mitigation and investing in development processes, which reduces the vulnerability of those most at risk. The Council was asked by the 2005 World Summit to play a role in monitoring a coherent international response. In recent years, it has undertaken that role by convening emergency sessions aimed at strengthening the coordination of the emergency humanitarian system of the United Nations. I believe that the time has come to adopt a regular practice for turning to the Council whenever major humanitarian emergencies occur. That would be a step towards the implementation of its mandate to address such situations.

In conclusion, a more substantive and interactive relationship is developing between the Assembly and the Council that should help in providing practical orientation to the international community in the follow-up to the 2005 World Summit Outcome. My experience as President of the Economic and Social Council has shown me the potential of the Council in meeting many of the core concerns of the international community. The convening power and the spirit of engagement that have been the hallmark of United Nations conferences are captured in the Economic and Social Council. That inclusive spirit of United Nations international conferences permeated this year's session of the Council.

It is now a time of great change. New forms of international cooperation are emerging and new institutional arrangements are being put in place as part of the efforts to eradicate poverty, protect people from disasters and protect our environment and especially to

address climate change. It is also a time of high expectations: despite important gains in the standard of living, there remain tremendous challenges including poverty and hunger, especially in Africa. We must get development right for the world's peoples.

**Mr. Mahmood** (Pakistan): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the item entitled, "Report of the Economic and Social Council" and the item entitled, "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields".

The 2007 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council was special and in some ways historic, because we embarked on the operationalization of the new responsibilities assigned to the Council by the leaders at the 2005 World Summit. Those responsibilities were elaborated in General Assembly resolution 61/16.

For the Group of 77 and China this was a welcome and important step towards revitalizing and further strengthening the Economic and Social Council, with a view to allowing it to perform the central role on economic and social issues envisaged for it under the United Nations Charter.

During the substantive session, we were happy to see the thematic discussion of the high-level segment develop complementarity with the newly acquired functions of the Economic and Social Council: the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum. We were able to articulate our views and vision on strengthening efforts at all levels to promote pro-poor sustained economic growth, including through equitable macroeconomic policies.

The Group of 77 and China is also reasonably satisfied with the convening of the first annual ministerial review and the successful launch of the Development Cooperation Forum during the 2007 Session. Nonetheless, we believe that the first annual ministerial review was a somewhat one-sided event, with only developing countries making their voluntary national presentations. We would like to take the opportunity to reiterate our call for substantive and equal participation on the part of developed partners in future sessions of the annual ministerial review. It would help to know how far their policies are in conformity with the guidelines for aid effectiveness, as well as how they see the implementation of the commitments undertaken under the internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals.

It is our hope that the annual ministerial review will look honestly at the status of implementation by both developed and the developing countries and will come to conclusions that will invigorate the process of implementation of the commitments undertaken under the Millennium Development Goals and the internationally agreed development goals and that it will advance the development agenda in a comprehensive and universal manner, so that we can eradicate poverty.

We are also glad that, consistent with paragraph 8 of resolution 61/16, we have been able to decide on the annual ministerial review themes for 2007 and 2008, focusing on the implementation of agreed development goals and commitments. The Group of 77 and China is of the firm view that the purpose of the annual ministerial review, in addition to reviewing the status of implementation of various commitments, should be to identify the gaps, shortcomings and successes, both at the national level and at the level of our development partners, and to further develop policy recommendations to advance the implementation process. We hope that future ministerial declarations issued by the Economic and Social Council after annual ministerial reviews will contain both an assessment as well as recommendations for action. In this regard, the adoption of the ministerial declaration by consensus at the first session of the reinvigorated Economic and Social Council was also auspicious and bodes well for our future work.

The Group of 77 and China looks forward to the substantive launch of the Development Cooperation Forum in 2008. We see the Development Cooperation Forum as an outstanding opportunity to enhance global partnership for development as set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

In our view, the overall purpose of the Development Cooperation Forum should be to ensure, first, that development cooperation is responsive to the needs of the developing countries, as set out in their national development plans and strategies, and to the internationally agreed development goals and the Millennium Development Goals; secondly, that the

quality and quantity of development financing is adequate and appropriate to the needs of the recipient countries; thirdly, that development cooperation achieves the desired objectives and results; and fourthly, that such cooperation is pursued in a coordinated and coherent manner at the national, regional and global levels.

The effectiveness and relevance of the Development Cooperation Forum will depend to a large extent on the ability to monitor implementation. As in the case of the annual ministerial review, we would advocate the development of agreed criteria and benchmarks to measure the implementation, effectiveness and results of development cooperation.

The Group of 77 and China has consistently called for effective monitoring of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the internationally agreed development goals. We believe that, while there are some indicators to measure progress achieved with regard to the first seven MDGs, specific benchmarks and targets should be developed to measure the implementation of MDG 8, as well as the internationally agreed development goals. We call on the United Nations — especially the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, as well as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the World Trade Organization, to contribute to the elaboration of this type of specific benchmarks to facilitate the monitoring of the implementation of MDG 8 and other internationally agreed development goals.

*Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The resolution entitled "Follow-up to the development outcome of the 2005 World Summit, including the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals" (resolution 60/265) reaffirmed that the United Nations is the central, fully inclusive, global, multilateral, international and representative organization responsible for development policies, review and progress, and for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the United Nations major conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.

The United Nations system must, therefore, in accordance with resolution 60/265, strengthen the existing mechanisms and, where appropriate, establish effective mechanisms to monitor, review and follow-up on the implementation of the outcomes of all the major United Nations conferences and summits in the social, economic and related fields as a matter of priority.

We also look forward during this session to the convening of a specific meeting of the General Assembly, pursuant to resolution 60/265, focused on development, covering, inter alia, an assessment of progress made over the previous year.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the importance of the United Nations playing a central role in the promotion of international cooperation for development. The United Nations should undertake regular periodic review and assessment of international economic and development policies, including those of the Bretton Woods institutions, and their impact on development. In this regard, we request the Secretary-General to undertake an analysis of the resources needed to exercise the mandates, as outlined in decisions taken in General Assembly resolutions 60/265 and 61/16.

**Mr. Lobo de Mesquita** (Portugal): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes this opportunity to discuss the report of the Economic and Social Council and the work of the Council in 2007 (A/62/3). Indeed, this year has been an historic one for the Economic and Social Council, with the holding of the first annual ministerial review and Development Cooperation Forum, giving life to the reforms instituted by our heads of State and Government during the 2005 World Summit.

These new modalities ensure that the Economic and Social Council will remain the central mechanism for the follow-up of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals. Indeed, the annual ministerial review and the Development

Cooperation Forum will serve as a vehicle to step up efforts to put the international community on track to meeting the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and to reinforce the Council's coordinating role in the economic, social, environmental and related fields.

The decision by the Council to focus the first annual ministerial review on the theme of "Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development" was appropriate, channelling thereby the efforts of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council around MDG 1.

As the objective of this meeting is to provide a global high-level forum where a systematic review of progress is made in the implementation of the United Nations development agenda, including offering a platform for an exchange of lessons learned and successful practices and approaches, the European Union remains committed to continue focusing these efforts on the MDGs on an individual or clustered basis, so as to keep them under systematic and substantive review, thereby increasing the attention given to these critical development areas.

With its new functional architecture and potential to advance implementation by promoting synergies and linkages, the annual ministerial review started already this year to present itself as a high-level, well-attended forum aimed at looking more deeply at strategic issues of the international development agenda and associated policy responses. In this regard, the organization of the informal high-level roundtables that dealt with climate change and its complex linkages with poverty eradication and sustainable development, desertification and public health, deserve very positive mention.

The European Union strongly believes that the United Nations must be at the centre of global efforts to tackle climate change. It therefore strongly advocates constructive dialogue and encourages consideration of these issues in all appropriate forums, as long as these efforts remain linked to the United Nations process.

The EU is pleased that the Council, during its resumed substantive session, adopted a two-year programme of work for the annual ministerial review, following the recommendation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the work of the Economic and Social Council. This programme of work for the high-level segment will provide a solid work plan that will aid in raising the profile of the work of the Council and provide the predictability necessary for the subsidiary bodies of the Council and other relevant actors to best contribute to its deliberations in a timely manner.

The Economic and Social Council should not act alone, but should build on the work done by its subsidiary machinery and benefit from outside contributions, be they from the wider international community or from civil society. The European Union is of the view that, to maintain the predictability required to ensure the best level of preparation for and participation in the annual ministerial review, the Council must ensure that themes for future sessions are adopted, preferably, two years in advance of their organization.

The European Union fully expects that the Development Cooperation Forum will become an important part of the international discussion on the development cooperation agenda and the global partnership for development, as well as a crucial mechanism to emphasize the Council's role as the policy coordination body of the United Nations system for economic, social and environmental matters. The Forum could be an important coordination and cooperation mechanism in the context of the existence of an array of multilateral and bilateral players, a growing number of new donor countries and an increasing number of special-purpose global funds, added to the growing role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector in development cooperation. The very fact that the Forum is open to participation by all stakeholders, including United Nations organizations, international financial and trade institutions, regional organizations, civil society and private sector representatives, strengthens the European Union's conviction about the utility of such a Forum.

Regarding the agenda of the Development Cooperation Forum, the European Union considers it important that the Forum also address issues such as aid architecture, the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the role of new and emerging donors. This dialogue should also contribute to ensuring that important principles relevant to development cooperation, such as the principle of national ownership and leadership, are fully taken into account by all stakeholders. The EU

looks forward to the shaping of an agenda for next year's Development Cooperation Forum that raises the added value of this new modality and does not duplicate work done by others.

Permit me now to make a few points regarding the other segments of the substantive session of the Council. By focusing its discussions and interaction on the theme of the role of the United Nations system in promoting full employment and decent work, following up on the 2006 ministerial declaration, the coordination segment this year allowed for a thorough assessment of United Nations system-wide endeavours to revive the goals of employment and decent work for all as essential elements for all international and national policies, in the context of the MDGs, poverty reduction strategies and other policy frameworks. Work and employment are really key elements in the context of sustainable development, in all of its three dimensions, connecting the economic dimension of people's lives with the social and the environmental dimensions. In this sense, decent work cannot merely be seen as a source of income, but also perceived as a condition for people to live a self-determined life and to participate fully as citizens in their communities and their entire natural environment.

As regards the humanitarian segment of the substantive session, dedicated to the strengthening of the coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance through enhancing the effectiveness of needs-based humanitarian assistance, we were very pleased with the discussions surrounding not only aspects of assistance and continued humanitarian reform in the larger sense, but also the debate on important issues such as the use of military assets in natural disaster relief and needs-based humanitarian financing. The EU looks forward, and is committed, to working with others during this General Assembly in order to continue the dialogue and make further contributions in the context of the humanitarian agenda for the benefit of people in need.

The operational activities segment provided a platform for extensive discussions on the upcoming triennial comprehensive policy review of the United Nations system's operational activities for development that will serve as an important basis for General Assembly consideration and orientation of reforms in this critical area of the United Nations. The EU welcomes the 2007 triennial comprehensive policy review as a unique tool to further advance current reforms to improve the effectiveness of United Nations operational activities and their responsiveness to developing countries' needs and national priorities and the achievement of the MDGs and the internationally agreed development goals.

The general segment of the substantive session was rather successful this year, having managed to resolve a majority of the issues before it. Indeed, a majority of the remaining issues were dealt with during the recent resumed substantive session of the Council. Without disregarding other equally important items before the Council in its resumed session, the EU would like to recall the adoption of a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the adoption of a multi-year programme of work for the period of 2007-2015 for the United Nations Forum on Forests, considering their particular importance in the context of international forest policy and cooperation around the shared global objectives on forests. The EU is of the view that the organization of a special public event, coinciding with the adoption of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests by the General Assembly, would not only increase public awareness of this landmark instrument, but would also further contribute to strengthening political commitment and action at all levels around the shared global objectives on forests.

The Council, through its annual spring meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, will have an important role in the run-up to the 2008 Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha in 2008. It can play that role by selecting carefully and in a timely manner the themes to be considered at the spring meeting, with a view to the Council President's summary providing a substantive and concrete contribution to the deliberations of the Doha Conference later that year.

The European Union is committed to completing the mandate of strengthening the Council, as mandated by paragraphs 155 and 156 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1). Indeed, the adoption of resolution 61/16 and the subsequent organization of the annual ministerial review and the launching of the Development Cooperation Forum have been concrete steps towards two of the three aspects of this strengthening. In this context, the European Union is

looking forward to the discussions held on the adaptation of work of the Council, including its organization of work, agenda and current methods of work, as the third pillar of this strengthening, as per Council decision 2006/206. One critical issue that will need to be discussed in that exercise will be the structure of the high-level segment and the balance between the sessions to be held in New York and Geneva. We look forward to discussions on these important issues in December.

Before closing, the European Union takes this opportunity to thank the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council for its efforts ensuring the success of its previous and recently resumed substantive sessions. We also extend our congratulations to the Secretariat for all of its hard work, including the new Economic and Social Council website, which has proved to be an extremely useful tool.

**Mr. Voto-Bernales** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation associates itself with what was said by delegation of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

One year has gone by since the approval of resolution A/61/16 concerning the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, which establishes, inter alia, two elements that my country considers fundamental to improving the work of the Council — substantive annual reviews at the ministerial level, and the Development Cooperation Forum.

In this respect, we welcome with great pleasure the first annual ministerial review, which took place in Geneva in July of this year and which focused on the theme of strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development.

In this respect, we wish to point out certain concepts that we deem fundamental and which have been defined in the ministerial declaration: first, the determination to strengthen the work to eradicate the scourges of poverty and hunger, and to ensure that the greatest priority be given to this objective in national development strategies and international cooperation for development; secondly, the commitment to promote sustained economic growth in the developing countries and the recognition that the national activities in this area must be supplemented in a conducive international context; and thirdly, the recognition of poverty and inequality constitute a problem for all countries, irrespective of their level of development. Furthermore, poverty continues to be a huge problem in middle-income countries, and it is necessary to support relevant initiatives to alleviate it.

In this regard, the fight against poverty and inequity is currently our most formidable challenge, as well as the driving principle behind the national and foreign policy of Peru. Based on the belief that human dignity and well-being are the focus of its efforts and that economic indicators must be based on the well-being of our population without distinction, the Peruvian Government has refocused its social policy to focus on economic inclusion, access to education and technological innovations, as well as nationwide institutional development and support for the population.

Furthermore, to comply with the Millennium Development Goals, Peru firmly aims to reduce the present level of poverty from 50 per cent to 30 per cent by the year 2011. Chronic malnutrition will be reduced from 25 per cent to 16 per cent, and drinking water services and electricity will be extended to 90 per cent of Peru's citizens. In addition, we have planned to eradicate illiteracy, reduce informal employment from 53 per cent to 35 per cent, create 1.5 million jobs and reduce the external debt from 24 per cent to 13 per cent of the gross domestic product.

My country also welcomes the start-up last July in Geneva of the Development Cooperation Forum. In fact, as the President of the Economic and Social Council said during the launching of the Forum, this constitutes a fundamental stage in the implementation of the global partnership for development. For the first time, questions of international cooperation will be reviewed by the Economic and Social Council in order to strengthen the impact of cooperation for development.

In this respect, we believe that the Forum should be strengthened by the results of meetings like the third High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, which took place only one week ago in this Assembly. The important concepts and different approaches mentioned here must serve as guidelines for the work of the Forum. In this respect, my country wishes to express its will and commitment to participate actively in Forum discussions.

The other element that we wish to emphasize in the report of the Council (A/62/3) has to do with the

report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its seventh session, which the Forum adopted by consensus, but the decision to adopt the report was deferred by the Council at its Geneva meeting. Peru attaches great importance to the work of this Forum and, therefore, reiterates the urgency of the Council's adopting the report.

To conclude, Peru will continue to promote dialogue and agreement between the peoples of the world as being fundamental values to which they are committed. For that reason and in this belief, Peru has submitted its candidacy to become a member of the Economic and Social Council during the 2009 to 2011 period, for which we request the support of all countries in the elections that will be held in 2008.

**Mr. Maksimychev** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, the Russian delegation would like to thank the President of the Economic and Social Council for the very detailed and informative presentation of the Council's report (A/62/3), and would also like to express some words of thanks to the Secretariat for their selfless work in supporting the Council.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that the Russian Federation has constantly favoured strengthening the role of the Economic and Social Council as the leading coordinating body within the United Nations system working to elaborate effective multilateral approaches to resolving urgent problems of socio-economic development and implementing the decisions of the most important forums of the United Nations on development matters. We highly commend the results of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council for 2007. For the first time it was held in its renewed and strengthened format, which became a historic event from the point of the view of the Council's mastering the new functions that were given to it by the World Summit in 2005.

We also commend the first annual ministerial review, which we believe became the highlight of the session. We favour the further development of the practice of the holding, as part of the annual ministerial reviews, of voluntary national presentations, which would be devoted to reviewing the progress of countries in achieving international development goals. We consider the annual ministerial review to be an effective mechanism for monitoring the implementation of and follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits, as provided by the relevant decisions of the Organization. We believe that on the whole, the annual ministerial review has enabled the Council to more effectively carry out its mandate of coordinating international cooperation within the framework of the global development agenda.

Of equal importance is the launching of the Development Cooperation Forum, which we believe will serve as a key platform for dialogue among various parties interested in considering the effectiveness of promoting development.

As the session demonstrated, its traditional segments — the coordination, operational activities, humanitarian affairs and general segments — continue to be relevant. The need to further strengthen the Council as the principal body ensuring coordination in the economic, social, humanitarian and environmental fields within the entire United Nations system has reaffirmed the importance of the session's coordination segment, which provides a forum for a practical, focused consideration of matters related to the work of the Council's auxiliary bodies. We are pleased that the operational activities segment has maintained its lead role in the discussion and formulation of guidelines concerning operational matters. We also welcome the fact that the fundamental principles guiding this area of the work of the Organization were reaffirmed during the segment.

The outcome of the humanitarian segment indicates that the role of the Council in developing the overall discussion within the United Nations on issues related to humanitarian aid has been strengthened. Moreover, the significance of the Council, as the Organization's basic working forum for the consideration of humanitarian issues, has been reaffirmed.

Given the complexity and variety of the items on the Council's agenda, the general segment also continues to be relevant. We believe it to be essential if the Council is to effectively carry out its functions of assigning tasks and monitoring the work of its auxiliary bodies in development-related matters.

We are convinced that the main outcome of the session has been to reaffirm the role of the Economic and Social Council as the principal United Nations organ providing for the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and as a platform

for the formulation of political decisions and concrete practical recommendations on international cooperation in the social, economic, humanitarian and environmental fields.

It is clear that the reform of the Economic and Social Council, which has enhanced the Council's status within the United Nations system, has now been successfully completed. That important body will now be able to focus more effectively on finding agreed solutions to current development-related problems. We also realize that, as the situation evolves in the field of international development, the Council, given its new functions, may occasionally have to revisit the issue of refining its working methods.

For our part, we should like to assure the General Assembly that the Russian Federation intends to continue to play an active role in the work of the Economic and Social Council by promoting optimum decision-making that takes the approaches of all interested parties equally into account.

**Mrs. Mills** (Jamaica): Jamaica welcomes the opportunity to speak on agenda item 43, on the report of the Economic and Social Council for 2007 (A/62/3). We are particularly pleased to do so following the successful convening this summer of the annual ministerial review and the launch of the Development Cooperation Forum. We expect that this will signal a new phase in our discussions on issues regarding international cooperation for development and the role of the United Nations in advancing the development agenda. We wish to recognize and commend the efforts of the Permanent Representative of Lithuania, President of the Council for 2007, and the rest of his Bureau in guiding the work of the Council since the start of the year.

In addition to the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, with which my delegation wishes to associate itself, I wish to make the following comments on some of the issues that my delegation believes should be borne in mind.

Since the start of the year, the Council has embarked on several key initiatives of particular importance to my delegation. The discussions during the high-level segment of the substantive session, as well as those within the context of the Council's special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, are especially noteworthy.

We also welcome the focus in the coordination segment on promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all, as well as the discussions in the operational activities segment, which will no doubt be instrumental in the General Assembly's ongoing deliberations on the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities aimed at development of the United Nations system.

In addition, we welcome the deliberations held in the context of the provision of humanitarian assistance to affected countries and the many issues covered as part of the Council's work during the general segment. We think that they add currency and value to the wider debate on the issues on the development agenda and that they are integral to forging consensus on how best to advance the implementation of commitments made to promote social and economic development. That is significant, given that we are at risk of failing to attain many of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and given the ever-increasing inequality within and among countries.

Against that background, we see merit in enhancing the impact of the Council's deliberations. That is essential for two reasons. The first is in the context of restoring the imbalance that currently persists with respect to the effective participation of developing countries in global economic decision-making. We remain concerned that calls for good governance at the national level are not reinforced when it comes to the requirements of good governance, transparency and accountability at the global level.

The second reason stems from the need to fully implement the development agenda. In that regard, we have very high expectations of the work to be undertaken by the Council, particularly the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF). We believe that the DCF can be a forum for genuine dialogue among Member States — both developed and developing countries — to identify concrete proposals that can give much-needed impetus to the advancement of the global partnership for development.

In the same vein, we believe that the annual spring meeting can be strengthened to better enhance the level of cooperation and coordination between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the

World Trade Organization, without prejudice to their respective governance structures. It is our hope that we will be able to work together to attain that broader objective. In that regard, the current duration and outcome of the spring meeting — which is now confined to one-day meetings and presidential summaries — might have to be re-examined.

The work of the Economic and Social Council in promoting policy dialogue and in coordinating the work of the United Nations in the follow-up and implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits remains indispensable. It is central to the overall leadership role of the United Nations in promoting the development agenda. For that reason, we attach great importance to ensuring that the Council is adequately equipped and resourced to effectively discharge that responsibility. It is therefore our expectation — particularly in the light of the new functions that the Council will have to assume pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/16 — that this issue will be given special attention by the General Assembly. Consideration should also be given to ensuring that the Council has greater flexibility so that it can take action on development issues as they arise.

My delegation also expects that the Economic and Social Council will continue to expand its collaboration with other organs — especially the Security Council — and with bodies such as the Peacebuilding Commission to ensure its participation in the consideration of the economic and social dimensions of conflict situations. That is central to ensuring the rebuilding and strengthening of the economic foundations for stability and overall development.

**Mr. Hannesson** (Iceland): I would like to begin by thanking my dear friend and colleague, Ambassador Dalius Čekuolis of Lithuania, the President of the Economic and Social Council, for presenting the 2007 report of the Economic and Social Council, which provides a very good overview of the work of the Council. I would also like to, on a personal note, thank him for our close cooperation in the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council during the past two years.

I would first like to say a few words about this year's substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. The themes for the annual ministerial review and the thematic discussion of the high-level segment this year were well chosen for this first session of the reformed Economic and Social Council. Both themes focused on the eradication of poverty, which is certainly at the heart of the global partnership for development. I am particularly pleased with how successfully the link was made between sustained economic growth and the eradication of poverty in the discussions on both themes.

I would like to draw your special attention to the importance of promoting gender equality in our efforts to eradicate poverty. By empowering women and ensuring equal opportunity, countries can achieve great gains. There is, however, a long way to go. Women are still much more likely than men to be poor, malnourished and illiterate. They usually have less access than men to employment and they are far less likely than men to be politically active. Women's empowerment should be at the centre of any development strategy and ensuring gender equality is vital for pro-poor sustained economic growth and the eradication of poverty.

I will not elaborate on other segments of the Economic and Social Council. I would, however, like to highlight the decisions dealing with the Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on countries emerging from conflict, where we have once again established the primary importance of the Economic and Social Council in the area of long-term sustainable development in post-conflict situations. Further continuation of the Groups on Haiti and Guinea-Bissau is an indication of this importance.

We can be fairly satisfied with the overall outcome of this year's substantive session, which marked a milestone in the life of the Economic and Social Council by making the annual ministerial review a success and by launching the biennial Development Cooperation Forum (DCF). I would now like to turn to the future role of the Economic and Social Council, which is facing new challenges with its new functions.

The Council will hold its first substantive session of the DCF next year. The universal and political legitimacy of the Forum — involving all Member States of the United Nations and a broad range of stakeholders engaged in development cooperation — makes it an ideal forum for providing global oversight of aid commitments and aid quality.

The findings and recommendations of the 2008 DCF should also become a reference point for the discussions taking place in next year's Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in Doha, as well as in the Accra High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. For the DCF to add value to these important intergovernmental processes, it is imperative that the analytical preparations and the consultative process be focused. It is now more important than ever that we avoid overlap and duplication of work.

Another challenge for the Economic and Social Council is the outcome of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence. Coordination remains central to the Economic and Social Council functions, and I am sure that the outcome of the follow-up to the Panel's report will strengthen the work of the Council in that area.

As I have had the honour to serve as a Vice-President of the Council for two years, the Economic and Social Council has become closer to my heart than before. I am, therefore, proud of this year's session of a reformed and stronger Economic and Social Council. We should, however, not become complacent. Reform is not over. It is in our hands to make sure that the DCF will become a real forum for development cooperation. A successful Council meeting here in New York next year will be critical, as well as inspirational, for a stronger Economic and Social Council in the future.

**Mr. Dapkiunas** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Belarus delegation is pleased to note the positive changes that are occurring in the work of the Economic and Social Council. The organizational and deliberative innovations of this year cannot fail to promote a more focused and fruitful consideration of the problems on the agenda of the Council. The exchange of views in the high-level segment on key issues of international socio-economic development, the analysis of global trends for sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty as well as the process of meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have become even more focused and authoritative.

In this connection, we would like to refer to the responsible and purposeful work of the Economic and Social Council carried out by the Bureau of the Council and its President, Mr. Čekuolis. We welcome the approaches agreed to at the ministerial session of the Council, where an integrated mechanism to ensure international assistance to needy countries was elaborated. We sincerely hope that this will serve as a practical guide for Member States regarding, first and foremost, the facilitation of access on the part of developing and transitional economy countries to the markets of developed countries.

Belarus wholeheartedly supports continuing the practice of inviting the leaders of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization to meetings of the high-level segment of the Council. This approach, we believe, makes it more effectively possible to combine the efforts of the specialized agencies and the operational funds and programmes to elaborate financial mechanisms for averting and overcoming crises in countries with developing markets.

The economic situation of the world is, on the whole, favourable to achieving the MDGs. However, we know many of the targets are far from having been met. In this connection, we believe that the Economic and Social Council needs to make additional efforts to adapt the instruments for achieving these goals to the conditions prevailing in the developing and transitional economy countries. More energetic encouragement should be given to economic growth in these countries and to promoting the adoption and enhancing of the effectiveness of the implementation of national strategies to combat poverty, hunger, sickness and to enhance financial stability.

Belarus is convinced that there is a need to strengthen the work of the Economic and Social Council aimed at providing targeted support to the efforts of countries with transitional economies. We should recall that it is precisely this group of countries that forms an important reserve for expanding the global donor group for development purposes. In particular, it is important to more actively provide technical assistance that will help to expand the economies of countries with transitional economies, so they can elaborate their own economic policies and strategies in the field of development.

**Mr. Petranto** (Indonesia): I am speaking on behalf of Ambassador Natalegawa.

Let me first of all thank the Secretary-General for his report on the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

(A/62/89), and the Economic and Social Council for its report for 2007 (A/62/3).

I also wish to align Indonesia's statement with the representative of Pakistan, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields have been instrumental in shaping a broad development vision and defining commonly agreed objectives. Considering their close association, one sector's outcome will surely have an impact on another. For this reason, it is vital to ensure a synergistic follow-up of the various conferences and summits at the institutional level.

We appreciate the efforts undertaken within the United Nations system to enhance the coherence among the various conference follow-up processes. One of the most important developments in that connection was the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council through resolution 61/16 last year. This year, we welcome its operationalization, including the annual ministerial review during the Council's high-level segment in Geneva, and next year in the Development Cooperation Forum.

From my delegation's perspective, these new mechanisms better equip the Council to perform its core functions envisaged in the Charter, as well as to oversee system-wide coordination. My delegation believes that no effort should be spared in making full use of the annual ministerial review as a powerful new tool to advance implementation of the internationally agreed development goals in the economic and social fields.

Furthermore, much is being anticipated with the launch of the biennial High-level Development Cooperation Forum next year. Many developing countries hope that the Forum will help to accelerate the commitments set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Additionally, the Economic and Social Council's spring meetings with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, held over the last few years, have set into motion an interactive and constructive multilateral dialogue that has helped to enhance the voice of developing countries within those international financial institutions.

While acknowledging the positive developments at the global level, integrated and coordinated follow-up must be translated into progress at the country level. National development and poverty reduction strategies must be met with the support of the United Nations. Likewise, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization should also work more closely with the United Nations to match regional and country priorities.

Let me conclude by saying how important the next seven years will be. This year, we reached the halfway mark to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2015 deadline. In view of next year's 2008 Review Conference of the Monterrey Consensus, let us make full use of the current developments in the Economic and Social Council to accelerate progress and ensure that the world is not off track in achieving the MDGs.

**The Acting President**: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 43.

**Agenda item 48**

**Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/89)**

**Mr. Shervani** (India): We welcome the opportunity to express our views on the agenda item entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields", particularly on the crucial role of the Economic and Social Council in this regard. We thank the Secretary-General for his report on this issue.

We agree with the Secretary-General that over the last 15 years, the major United Nations conferences and summits have together resulted in the emergence of a comprehensive shared vision of development. Further, as the report notes, the 2005 World Summit embraced a broader concept of internationally agreed development goals, not just limited to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which can be reached through the implementation of the broader set of

commitments undertaken at the major United Nations conferences and summits. We also welcome the recognition in the report of the critical role played by the Economic and Social Council in fostering a comprehensive development agenda of the United Nations through an integrated and coordinated implementation of the commitments.

In this regard, we welcome the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council last year and the incorporation of new elements in its functioning. Of these, the annual ministerial review has already been instituted. We believe that this annual event must have a special focus on evaluating the implementation of the global partnership for development and cannot remain limited to assessing national efforts made at achieving the MDGs.

The Development Cooperation Forum has an important role to play in overseeing trends in international development cooperation. The objective must be to ensure that such cooperation is aimed at assisting developing countries in implementing their national development strategies, rather than imposing additional aid conditionalities.

We are happy that the Economic and Social Council has finalized a two-year programme of work for 2008 and 2009 in respect of the annual ministerial review. We believe that this programme will provide the necessary lead time to the various entities of the United Nations system to focus their efforts on the important themes chosen by the Council. However, it is also important for the Council to analyse and discuss topical and emerging issues and not be constrained by the previously agreed programme of work. In this regard, we emphasize the importance of the thematic debate in the high-level segment of the Council's substantive session and urge the early finalization of the theme for the 2008 session.

We believe that the key element of the Economic and Social Council's activities regarding the development agenda relates to its acknowledged role as a principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development. In this regard, we underline the importance of the new mandate given to the Council last year for undertaking a regular and periodic review and assessment of international economic and development policies and their impact on development.

International economic, financial and trade policies play a crucial role vis-à-vis the development efforts of developing countries. Unfortunately, current institutional structures do not effectively take on board the concerns and perspectives of developing countries in the formulation and implementation of policies, even though developing countries are most affected by such policies. Some of the telling indicators of the need for urgent and fundamental reform of the international financial and economic architecture are the large precautionary accretion of reserves by developing countries as a result of conditionality-based lending by the Bretton Woods institutions; the continuing burden of conditionalities, even after the modification of the structural adjustment by the Bretton Woods institutions; the current fragilities — if not crisis — of the financial system; the history of inappropriate advice from the Bretton Woods institutions, such as during the Asian financial crisis; the declining relevance and effectiveness of those institutions in financing for development; the continuing problems relating to external debt and debt sustainability; and the negative trends in the flow of official development assistance, which remains crucial in assisting development efforts. Such reform must enhance the voice and participation of developing countries in the decision-making and norm-setting process. The United Nations, given its unique role and legitimacy, must oversee that process through the Economic and Social Council.

The strengthened mandate of the Economic and Social Council and the need for the United Nations to play a central role in reviewing international economic, financial and trade policies — including a periodic review of the policies of the Bretton Woods institutions — from a development perspective will remain on paper unless backed up with adequate technical resources and expertise. We call for the United Nations system, particularly the secretariat of the Economic and Social Council, to be strengthened and provided with adequate resources and expertise so as to assist in the effective discharge of those activities.

We also need to consider innovative mechanisms, such as an international debt commission and a committee of experts overseen by the United Nations, to assist in accelerating the development mandate of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. The latter is particularly critical, given its impact on issues that affect mankind, including

public health and the benefit-sharing use of genetic resources and affordable environment-friendly technologies, which are crucial for addressing climate change.

In conclusion, we would like to reaffirm the importance of keeping the development agenda at the heart of United Nations efforts and of the integrated and coordinated implementation of commitments made at the major United Nations conferences and summits, through the Economic and Social Council.

**The President**: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 48.

**Agenda item 49 (*continued*)**

**Culture of peace**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/337)**

**Note by the Secretary-General (A/62/97)**

**Draft resolution (A/62/L.6)**

**The President**: Members will recall that the Assembly held the High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace under this agenda item at its 17th, 18th and 19th plenary meetings, on 4 and 5 October 2007.

In connection with this item, the Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Director-General of UNESCO, circulated in document A/62/97.

I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh to introduce draft resolution A/62/L.6.

**Ms. Jahan** (Bangladesh): I welcome this opportunity to participate in the debate on the agenda item entitled "Culture of peace" and also to introduce a draft resolution under that item.

A little while ago, we were honouring the memory of Sri Chinmoy in Conference Room 4. Sri Chinmoy dedicated 37 years of service to the United Nations and its extended global family in promoting the cause of global peace, harmony and tolerance. It is a unique coincidence that now we are deliberating here on the culture of peace — a theme that epitomizes the very essence of the efforts to save humanity from the scourges of war and conflict and to promote peace and harmony.

The culture of peace is a set of principles and conduct for a way of living designed to renounce violence and to prevent the eruption of conflicts. It also focuses on the underlying causes of conflicts. It establishes areas of strength and weakness, so that both Governments and non-governmental organizations can develop policies that will encourage a culture of peace. It attempts to solve problems through dialogue and negotiations between individuals, States and groups.

The proliferation of ethnic, religious and civil conflicts emphasizes the need for a global transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace. A culture of peace can facilitate the emergence of universally shared values in a world where war and conflict continue to run rampant and international terrorism threatens the safety and security of humanity. It has enormous power to create a world order in which amity would supplant atrocity, harmony would overcome hatred and tolerance would replace prejudice.

Bangladesh enjoys a track record of religious freedom, harmony and tolerance. Our country has been at the forefront of initiatives that promote greater tolerance and understanding among peoples. That, in our view, is achievable through dialogue and cooperation.

Bangladesh was born out of a bloody conflict. We therefore see great value in the principles of tolerance, respect for diversity, democracy and understanding. Those ideals were endorsed by the United Nations membership in the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace in 1999 (resolution 53/243). Bangladesh was privileged to steer that process.

Bangladesh believes that lasting peace is inconceivable without poverty alleviation and sustainable development. In the pursuit of sustained peace, we have pressed our indigenous intellectual resources into the service of development. Ideas such as microcredit and non-formal education have wrought a profound societal transformation by unleashing the entrepreneurial skills of women. Our national experience shows that gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women are categorical imperatives for development, social stability and peace.

The awarding of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize to the microcredit pioneer Professor Yunus of Grameen Bank clearly demonstrates the link between poverty

alleviation, women's empowerment and peace. We stand ready to share our best practices with others.

Bangladesh has also sought to play an important role in the maintenance of international peace and security. Our commitment to United Nations peacekeeping remains unflinching. Bangladesh has long been among the top troop contributors.

As a member of the Peacebuilding Commission, Bangladesh is also increasingly engaged, with peacebuilding responsibilities, in strife-torn parts of the world. We are convinced that the promotion of a culture of peace can play a significant role in sustaining peace and development. We underscore the importance of integrating the culture of peace into the operational activities of the Peacebuilding Commission.

We are already in the seventh year of the Decade. At this juncture, we wish to express our gratitude to all actors who have contributed to its promotion. Appreciation is particularly owed to the United Nations and the bodies within the Organization and beyond that have made significant contributions to facilitating the process. We are particularly thankful to non-governmental organizations and civil society.

We believe that, in order to attain the set goals, this is the time for everyone to focus more on the implementation phase. We should start assessing the progress and obstacles experienced in our efforts to promote a culture of peace. The elements of a culture of peace may vary from nation to nation as each society has its own cultural uniqueness and diversity. We need to relate these country and society-specific variables to our envisioned culture of peace and identify areas of strengths and weaknesses. This would enable us to measure the extent to which a State possesses a culture of peace. It would, in turn, help us to set goals and ascertain progress towards creating peaceful societies. Such an assessment would provide objective standards and set a benchmark that nations would strive to attain.

Against this backdrop, I now have the honour to introduce a draft resolution entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010", A/62/L.6.

The draft contains some technical updates vis-à-vis the previous year's resolution.

First, the fourteenth preambular paragraph welcomes the designation of 2 October as International Day of Non-Violence, and the fifteenth welcomes the Secretary-General's appointment of a High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. Operative paragraph 14 expresses appreciation for the participation of Member States in the High-level Dialogue on interreligious and intercultural cooperation for the promotion of tolerance, understanding and universal respect on matters of freedom of religion or belief and cultural diversity, held on 4 and 5 October 2007.

I would like to recall that at the General Assembly last year this resolution received a record 114 sponsors. This year the list of sponsors remains open. Existing sponsors are listed in the draft resolution. I have the honour to read out the names of the following additional sponsors: Algeria, Angola, Belarus, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominica, Gabon, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Morocco, Nepal, Panama, Philippines, Russian Federation, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Viet Nam, Yemen and Zambia.

We are hopeful that in the course of the coming days many other delegations will accord similar support to our initiative by becoming sponsors of the draft resolution in a demonstration of global solidarity in our endeavours to achieve this noble goal.

**The Acting President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

**Mr. Godinho** (Portugal): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this declaration.

It has now been eight years since this Assembly adopted the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. The fact that we have just commemorated for the first time an International Day of Non-Violence, on the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, demonstrates how actual and important the

quest for instituting a culture of peace and non-violence remains in our time.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for transmitting the report of the Director General of UNESCO on the annual progress of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010), which presents an overview of the activities carried out by UNESCO, as the lead agency for the Decade, with the participation of other United Nations entities, Governments and civil society actors. We would like to commend UNESCO for the work carried out so far, and in particular for the efforts to effectively coordinate and engage a very large number of bodies and organizations within and outside the United Nations system.

The European Union (EU) is convinced of the primary importance of education in promoting a culture of peace. It is by investing our efforts in the youngest members of our society, and also in education through life, that we can best mainstream the principles of peace, tolerance and the protection and promotion of human rights.

Education empowers every citizen of every country in the world by giving him the tools to participate more actively in his community and to shape and improve his future. It also offers the best opportunity for teaching respect and tolerance towards cultural diversity and for combating discrimination on any grounds. It is undeniable that education plays a very important role in changing mindsets and behavioural patterns. It should be used even more to foster a culture of peace.

Human rights education is particularly relevant in this context. As we approach the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is of grave concern that universal and effective recognition and observance of the rights and freedoms proclaimed in it remain to be realized. Being aware of one's own human rights is an important contribution to ensure the long overdue full implementation of the Universal Declaration. That is why the European Union welcomes the Human Rights Council's recently adopted first phase of implementation of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, and we hope that we can all join efforts in supporting this and other initiatives to achieve our goal. In this regard, we very much look forward to the regional European meeting on the World Programme for Human Rights Education that is to be organized next week by the Council of Europe, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNESCO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Gender mainstreaming and action to ensure equality between women and men are also very important aspects in promoting a culture of peace. We welcome the role played by UNESCO in supporting the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. We also welcome the increasing emphasis on the need to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and in particular young girls, as demonstrated by the focus of the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

As for the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World, we are initiating the first year of implementation of the recommendations on the United Nations Study on Violence Against Children, which has been a strong catalyst for change. The European Union hopes that at this session the Assembly will seize the opportunity of the present situation to agree on the establishment of a high-level mechanism to promote the further implementation of those recommendations.

An essential aspect of promoting a culture of peace, recognized by the Programme of Action on that subject, is the work to advance understanding, tolerance and solidarity by promoting dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report on interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace (A/62/337), which highlights activities carried out by key United Nations entities involved in the field. As the European Union has stated in the Assembly's recent High-level Dialogue on interreligious and intercultural understanding and cooperation for peace,

> "The importance of intercivilizational understanding is strongly reflected in European Union policy and action. The EU is active in promoting intercultural and interreligious understanding, both within Europe and with international partners". (A/62/PV.17, p. 24)

The EU fully supports the Alliance of Civilizations initiative aimed at improving understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples, across cultures and religions and, in the

process, helping to counter the forces that fuel polarization and extremism.

The European Union welcomes the appointment by the Secretary-General of former President Jorge Sampaio as High Representative for the Alliance and appreciate that the action-oriented implementation plan he developed is already being implemented by the Alliance, in partnership with Governments, international and regional organizations, civil society groups, foundations and the private sector. We look forward to the first international forum of the Alliance, to be held in Spain in January 2008, and the further contribution of this initiative to our common goals.

**Mr. Al Khalifa** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): The State of Kuwait welcomes all the efforts that are being made in the area of strengthening the culture of peace by Member States of the United Nations, as well as the major role the General Assembly is assuming in this respect. Here, we would like to recall the efforts undertaken by UNESCO for its contribution to the development of a favourable environment for the culture of peace to thrive in the world. We express our gratitude to all the States that supported Kuwait's candidature for membership in the Executive Council of UNESCO during the recent elections in Paris. I also wish to affirm my country's continued support for UNESCO by all means and in all its areas of work.

Kuwait believes that people are not born with a mentality of strife and hatred, but rather that political strife and conflicts for personal interests are the main sources that feed the mind with the culture of violence. Since it is the responsibility of States and international organizations to raise awareness about the vital importance of rejecting violence, it is imperative to take into consideration the vital and central role of the media and educational institutions in creating a generation free of thoughts of violence and hatred and in contributing effectively to spreading the culture of peace.

We all recognize that our world is composed of peoples, cultures and religions that share many principles yet differ on others. Here, I wish to stress the utmost importance of interreligious and intercultural dialogue in enhancing the mutual respect and acceptance of various cultures, and the importance of considering cultural diversity as a source of enrichment for human civilization. In this respect, my country commends the High-level Dialogue on interreligious and intercultural understanding and cooperation for peace, called for by the Secretary-General at the General Assembly, earlier this month, as well as the outcome of that Dialogue.

Instigating hatred and fanaticism only breeds more of the same and sets back the efforts for peace and constructive interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Here, my delegation condemns the campaign against Islam in which some American universities are currently taking part. We warn of the consequences of such behaviour and call for unity against the manipulation of universities for racial purposes.

Respect for and acceptance of different cultures and religions, as well as fostering dialogue among them, will generate thoughts of peace within societies, while provocations through offences to religions and cultures, blaspheming their symbols and accusing them of encouraging terrorist practices, will only generate hatred, rancour and a desire for revenge. Revival of racial feuds, religious strife and incitement to hatred represents a serious threat to our aspirations in spreading the ideas of peace and love. It requires firm opposition from our international Organization.

In this regard, we affirm what was stated in General Assembly resolution 61/221, regarding the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace, which was endorsed by my Government, particularly as it relates to combating all forms of fanaticism and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief, in addition to the importance of respecting religious and cultural diversity and that of international cooperation in this regard.

Here I would like to highlight the efforts undertaken by the State of Kuwait to project the true meaning and tolerance of Islam by spreading the moderate middle ground of Islam. The Kuwaiti Council of Ministers established a special committee to promote our Islamic moderate middle ground. This committee held several international meetings outside of Kuwait, the most recent of which was in Washington last November. Some Muslim scholars participated in that meeting, discussing the true meaning of the Islamic faith and the promotion of the culture of peace in the context of Islam and its religious tolerance.

Development is the real way to achieve peace. On this basis, my country affirms that the best means to spread the culture of peace is the joint work in support

of the goals of sustainable development in order to avoid the causes of conflicts.

Half the States emerging from conflict risk regression into conflict. Furthermore, the root causes of conflict will remain a threat to peace unless solutions to them are found. I would like to emphasize the importance of supporting efforts of peacebuilding in helping countries emerging from conflict. In this context, my country commends the efforts by the Peacebuilding Commission and we will continue to support it, having contributed $500,000 to the Peacebuilding Fund.

In closing, my country's delegation wishes to reaffirm that respect for human rights, the application of equality and providing equal opportunities for all segments of society and freedom of expression form the basic pillars for the culture of peace. It is not possible to consolidate a culture of peace if people suffer from the lack of those rights. My country calls upon all States to adhere to these principles in order to create a world where future generations can progress and live in prosperity and well-being.

**Mr. Shinyo** (Japan): I would like to express my pleasure at the success of the High-level Dialogue that was held at the beginning of this month. It made clear once again that people of different races, religions, and cultures can coexist peacefully, both within and beyond national borders. It also provided participants with a valuable opportunity to hear about the important efforts that are being made in this area by the private sector.

The statements made at the High-level Dialogue, both by delegations and by representatives of the private sector, gave us food for thought about what we need to do if we are to create a culture of peace. While unfortunately there may be something in human nature that leads people to discriminate against, exclude, or attack those who have different religions or cultural backgrounds, such differences do not have to lead to conflict, as many speakers have pointed out. On the other hand, all too often the response to people who are different is hostility, which, combined with politics, can lead people to take up arms and sometimes embrace terrorism.

As some delegations pointed out, it is wrong for any of us to think we have unique access to the truth. We must avoid imposing our beliefs on others or exercising our rights without giving due consideration to their views.

In adopting its Constitution, Japan renounced war and the use or threat of use of force as a means of resolving international conflicts. In keeping with that commitment, in the sixty years that have passed since the conclusion of the Second World War, Japan has strived to prevent the development of a political basis for conflict, and even strives to eliminate it. And Japan also works to avoid the generation of the kind of hostility that would make a culture of peace impossible.

To this end, for example, Japan has hosted the World Civilization Forum and the Seminar for Inter-Civilizational Dialogue with the Islamic World, dispatched an exchange and dialogue mission to the Middle East and invited people involved with Islamic boarding schools to visit our country. We also support the conferences on the Dialogue Among Civilizations led by UNESCO and, in addition, have become a member of the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilization.

Education has an important role to play in preventing the generation of hostility and hatred. It must be impressed on everyone in the world that there are many religions and cultures and that tolerance is therefore essential if international peace and security are to be realized and human rights and fundamental freedoms secured.

The cooperation of the mass media is also essential. So it is important to continue to convene the International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. The seminar was held in Tokyo last June.

It is likewise crucial to continue to engage in interreligious and intercultural dialogue at all levels, including the national and regional levels. Needless to say, the cooperation of the private sector here, as in so many other areas, is needed.

Advocating and actually creating a culture of peace are two different matters. If a culture of peace is ever to be realized, we will need adequate social capital. Thus, we need to foster democracy and human rights and legal standards such as those set forth in Japan's Constitution. At the same time, it is necessary to improve human capital, as, by doing so, we foster personal independence and the dignity of the individual through education and ethical treatment. We believe

that those two kinds of capital complement each other and help to create a culture of peace.

I would like to talk now about human security. Human security is what a society achieves by protecting and empowering every individual, ensuring that each one is free from fear and want. The goal of human security has much in common with the goal of a culture of peace, namely, the satisfaction of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this sense, human security improves and enriches human capital. We are therefore convinced that in order to build a culture of peace, human security is important.

To help bring about a functioning culture of peace, Japan provides support of various kinds to developing countries. Recently, for example, it has been making a particularly great effort to achieve and maintain post-conflict peace, an interest that is also reflected in Japan's chairing the Peacebuilding Commission.

Turning to another area, since at least 1993, when it hosted the first Tokyo International Conference on African Development, Japan has devoted considerable energy to the development of Africa. At the fourth conference, which will be held in Yokohama in May of next year, one of the principal themes to be discussed will be establishing peace through human security. We intend to do everything in our power to work with the nations of Africa to help construct a culture of peace.

Finally, to promote peace in the Middle East, Japan has been promoting the framework of what we call a "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity". Under this framework, an agro-industrial park would be established in the West Bank with a distribution centre to be built to receive and transport goods. Our aim is to bring the parties together, here and in all of the places in the world where there is now conflict, by creating economic prosperity and, once again, a culture of peace.

**Mr. Davide** (Philippines): "Peace is one of humanity's most precious needs. It is also the United Nations' highest calling". Those are the opening words of the message of Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, on 21 September 2007, the International Day of Peace. These words of wisdom serve most fittingly as a guide to our debate today on agenda item 49 entitled "Culture of peace". The Secretary-General concluded his message with an admonition:

> "On this International Day, let us promise to make peace not just a priority, but a passion. Let us pledge to do more, wherever we are, in whatever way we can, to make every day a day of peace".

Those words must inspire us to look for or explore every possible avenue or initiative at the international, regional and national levels to promote and preserve peace so as to make every day a day of peace in all parts of the world. Complementary initiatives for peace should therefore be encouraged and allowed to blossom.

The General Assembly's High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, held on 4 and 5 October 2007, was the first in the history of the United Nations. It has taken the United Nations more than 60 years to recognize the potential and power of interfaith and intercultural collaboration to contribute immensely to the attainment of the lofty goals and vision of the United Nations, which was formed out of the horrible experience of war.

On the eve of the High-level Dialogue, the Secretary-General issued a report (A/62/337) announcing the much-awaited designation of the Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as the focal unit in the Secretariat mandated to deal with intergovernmental and United Nations system-wide processes on interreligious and intercultural dialogue and cooperation for peace, in accordance with resolution 61/221.

In addition to the recently concluded High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, two related developments occurred this year at the regional level. First, 15 countries of Asia and the Pacific region held their third Asia-Pacific Interfaith Dialogue conference in Waitangi, New Zealand, in May and adopted a Declaration affirming, among other things, the importance of interfaith dialogue and cooperation in the promotion of regional peace and security, social and economic development and human dignity. Secondly, 43 countries of Europe and Asia converged in Nanjing, China, in June to participate in the third Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Interfaith Dialogue forum, which adopted the Nanjing Statement on Interfaith Dialogue. It underscored the ASEM leaders'

recognition of the importance of interfaith dialogue in building harmony and understanding within the international community.

In other regions, countries and communities, interfaith dialogue and cooperation are being carried out at both the governmental and non-governmental levels as an option that complements existing mechanisms and processes aimed at achieving enduring peace, sustained development and enhanced human dignity, which are the three pillars of the United Nations.

It is incumbent upon the United Nations, as the highest Organization made up of representatives of all nations, to provide a multilateral framework or set of principles for cooperation at the regional and national levels, lest we end up in an endless cycle of debates or rhetorical discourse or in a fruitless search for an elusive peace.

Interfaith dialogues and cooperation for peace have recorded successes around the world. The World Conference on Religion and Peace initiated national interreligious councils that supported the de-escalation and settlement of conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Liberia and other conflict-stricken countries. In Cambodia, the Buddhist monk Maha Chosnanda initiated and inspired a peace and reconciliation movement following the Khmer Rouge reign of terror. The Christian Council of Churches in Madagascar was instrumental in the peaceful overthrow of the totalitarian regime there in the early 1990s.

In Mozambique, the lay Catholic movement Sant'Egidio became involved in mediation efforts at the peak of the 1989 civil war, resulting in the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement. Sant'Egidio also played constructive roles in Albania, Kosovo, Lebanon and other countries of Latin America and Africa. In South Africa, religious leaders typified by Desmond Tutu helped bring that country from apartheid to democracy. In Benin, Archbishop Isidore de Souza helped ensure the country's transition from dictatorship to democracy in the late 1980s. In Iraq, the Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani is well known for his position against kidnapping and violence. The Quakers, one of the historic peace churches, effectively mediated between parties in Nigeria, Uganda and other countries.

There have certainly been other cases in other countries where interfaith cooperation has resulted in effective peacemaking. In my own country, the Philippines, the late Archbishop Cardinal Sin led the peaceful People Power revolution in 1986, which toppled the dictatorship without any blood being spilled in the streets. Our Bishops-Ulama Conference, the first of its kind in the world, is our Government's partner in pursuing the peace process in southern Philippines. Our National Committee on Interfaith Cooperation oversees the implementation of our national plan of action on interfaith cooperation. With regard to civil society, the Philippine Interfaith Commission is actively involved in promoting not only peaceful coexistence, but also the sustained development of communities.

Equally as important as peacemaking — a remedial measure to alleviate or end the scourge of conflict — is conflict prevention. It is also in this field that interfaith cooperation should be carried out, in particular by focusing interfaith energies on development. Interfaith dialogue and cooperation should be a partnership between Governments and civil society. It should set aside theological or doctrinal issues and focus instead on shared concerns such as health, education, employment, humanitarian assistance and other development-related problems.

In conclusion, my delegation invites input from like-minded delegations to flesh out the concepts that I have mentioned for possible inclusion in the draft resolution on the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace that the Philippines and Pakistan are currently formulating to update resolution 61/221 and that we will submit early next month.

**Mr. Elbakly** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly is meeting today to reaffirm the international community's commitment to strengthening the culture of peace and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without any distinctions as to race, gender, language or religion. This meeting follows the High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, held earlier this month. The Dialogue reaffirmed the conviction that respect for the cultural diversity is a point of departure for launching a constructive international dialogue that permits mutual understanding and underscores the commitment to fostering a spirit of tolerance, disseminating knowledge

and correcting misconceptions, particularly among young people, in the belief that humanity cannot make further progress without communication between societies, however different and diverse their cultural and intellectual backgrounds may be.

Given the many international initiatives to address this issue, it has become essential to redouble our efforts to coordinate them. That includes supporting the activities of the High Representative of the Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations That includes supporting the activities of the High Representative of the Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations and the work of the Secretariat Office designated as a focal point to liaise with relevant entities of the United Nations system. In the forefront is UNESCO, which places the spreading of a culture of peace at the top of its priorities, and which is playing a major role in encouraging cooperation between Governments and the relevant United Nations agencies, programmes and funds. We hope that efforts to spread a culture of peace and to instil the ideals of tolerance and peaceful coexistence will continue throughout and beyond the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World.

One of the major phenomena accompanying globalization is the migration of men and women, with their diverse thoughts and beliefs, from one society to another. This has contributed to the emergence in the West of a growing interest in understanding other cultures, especially the Islamic culture. But, this interest unfortunately focuses on the negative rather than the positive, even though Islamic civilization's great contributions to the cultural and intellectual enrichment and advancement of the West attest to those positive aspects. As a result, some Western nations have taken a confrontational approach in dealing with Islamic culture, including by ridiculing its symbols and values on the pretext of exercising freedom of opinion and expression. That is combined with attempts to associate Islam with extremism, violence and terrorism. Moreover, the media sometimes portray Islam in a negative light, igniting hatred and blocking the spread of a the culture of peace.

Undoubtedly, the most perilous challenge to international peace and security is the proliferation of violence and the use of force as a means of expression. This is largely due to the inability of the international community, particularly the United Nations, to settle chronic political and economic problems. This failure breeds feelings of injustice, oppression and double standards, which impede the spread of the culture of peace. They are provoked by the attempts of some to impose their narrow views on promoting democracy, political reform and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms based on the illusion that their values, culture and justice systems are superior to others.

Peace is not merely a philosophy or a principle. It is a way of life and a code of civilized behaviour for the good of mankind. The advancement of our common purpose — to spread a culture of peace and the ideals of tolerance and peaceful coexistence — obliges us to confront the attempts of some to impose cultural hegemony in order to advance their narrow political goals and interests. It necessitates unified action to face malicious allegations that portray cultural differences between societies as catalysts for conflict. It also requires us to promote respect for the rights of migrants in receiving societies on an equal footing with other citizens and without discrimination or racism.

Concurrently, we have to redouble our efforts within the United Nations system to resolve such problems and to assist developing countries in realizing their peoples' legitimate aspirations to sustainable development and prosperity within an international framework characterized by democracy and equality. This in turn requires us to consolidate our efforts in the various areas of disarmament, ranging from nuclear weapons to small arms and other conventional weapons. In this regard, the United Nations must develop the ability to deal with the roots of conflict, mainly by broadening cooperation between all relevant United Nations bodies, agencies, funds and programmes on the one hand and regional and subregional organizations on the other.

In our view, the cooperation we desire between international and regional systems can offer an effective early warning mechanism and a way to buttress the preventive diplomacy efforts for which former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali called, including in his 1992 Agenda for Peace (A/47/277). That is the same philosophy upon which the Secretary-General's recent initiative to enhance the work of the Organization in the field of preventive diplomacy rests. This entails that we concentrate on narrowing the gap between North and South without attaching conditionalities that overburden the

developing countries or link the imposition of certain social or cultural concepts to development assistance.

We have to work side by side to rectify the balance of power among the principal organs of the United Nations in a manner that supports the role of the General Assembly as the Organization's most democratic and representative organ. We must also strengthen the role of the Peacebuilding Commission in approaching peacebuilding from an integrated and multidimensional perspective in order to smooth the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding, and encourage the Commission to continue its efforts to spread a culture of peace in societies emerging from conflict.

It is equally imperative that we support the work of the Human Rights Council without politicization, selectivity or double standards. We must adopt decisions ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in our campaign against terrorism, while concentrating on efforts to combat the roots of this despicable phenomenon and to eliminate violence and extremism. It is only through deepening dialogue, mutual understanding and education, and within the framework of partnership and cooperation with non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the whole spectrum of civil society that we can contribute to building a culture of peace in the minds of people.

As we celebrate, on 10 December 2007, the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to the lofty principles that we established together 60 years ago. The first of these is that the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. This can be achieved only through the spread of a culture of peace.

**Mrs. Aitimova** (Kazakhstan): At the outset, I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his report on interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace (A/62/337), which highlights the activities carried out by the key United Nations entities involved in the field of interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

I would also like to commend the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for its recent comprehensive report, contained in document A/62/97, which reflects a broad range of activities carried out by the United Nations system, international institutions and civil society in implementing various programmes and initiatives to promote and implement the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

The outcome document (resolution 60/1) adopted at the 2005 World Summit called on countries to take action to promote a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations at the local, national, regional and international levels. Kazakhstan acclaims the significant work of the United Nations and its agencies in addressing challenges and seeking ways forward in order to find policies, structures and programmes that can foster a culture of peace.

We welcome the outcomes of the informal thematic debate of the General Assembly on "Civilizations and the challenge for peace: obstacles and opportunities" and the High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, which were held this year.

Implementation of the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace has a crucial role in achieving the goals of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World.

We believe that education is one of the basic requirements for promoting tolerance and a culture of peace. Preventing intolerance and conflict can be achieved through tireless efforts in day-to-day activities and by taking timely, concrete actions at all levels. In that context, we commend UNESCO for its leading role in fostering the use of information and communication technologies to promote peace education on issues related to non-violence, tolerance and mutual understanding.

We believe that developing textbooks that teach cultural and religious tolerance while ensuring access to communication and information technologies are the most important preconditions for fostering tolerance and a culture of peace. The media also has an important role to play in supporting the global campaign for a culture of peace.

We share the vision of the need for fostering a culture of tolerance. Respect for cultures, traditions, customs and religious sentiments of other nations is an important condition for peace, mutual understanding

and friendship among peoples and countries. The principle of tolerance in Kazakhstan is not only a norm of political culture, but also one of the key principles of the State, which we decisively support and strengthen. We created our own model for preserving and strengthening interethnic and inter-religious concord. The centuries-old culture of harmonious coexistence of the Kazakh people with representatives of other religions and cultures is a norm and a natural pattern of behaviour of our people. The Government of Kazakhstan's policy to preserve and promote a climate of tolerance and accord in society constitutes an integral part of international efforts to foster the culture of peace and tolerance.

Interfaith dialogue is an integral part of efforts to promote the culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations. In Kazakhstan, we are convinced that the efforts to strengthen peace and security increasingly depend on the pursuit of dialogue and interaction among peoples of different faiths, cultures and traditions. We strongly believe that people of faith can help bridge the chasms of ignorance, fear and misunderstanding and set an example of interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

On 12 and 13 September 2006, the Second Congress of World and Traditional Religions took place in Astana. The Congress adopted a declaration to enhance the role and responsibility of religious leaders in the strengthening of international security. The Congress has become Kazakhstan's contribution to global dialogue among religions. Here I would like to reiterate the initiative of the President of Kazakhstan to hold the Third Congress of religious leaders in 2009 under the auspices of the United Nations. We also express hope that our proposal to declare one of the upcoming years as an international year of dialogue among religions and cultures will be supported by United Nations Member States.

Kazakhstan appreciates the efforts of the Secretary-General and United Nations Member States to make positive contributions to a culture of peace and stands ready to collaborate with the international community in implementing the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

**Mr. Tugio** (Indonesia): We are thankful to the Director-General of UNESCO for preparing the report on the implementation of resolution 61/45 as transmitted by the Secretary-General in document A/62/97 of 28 June 2007. My delegation wishes to further express our appreciation to UNESCO and other institutions of the United Nations system for their numerous initiatives in the last few years to promote a culture of peace. The report before us fully affirms the active involvement of Governments, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, as well as the media, in the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence for the children of the world.

In this era of globalization and interdependence, economic, social and cultural issues contribute significantly to peace and security. This is why efforts to promote a culture of peace represent an important response to increased interaction among all cultures and civilizations.

Indonesia attaches great importance to the various United Nations initiatives for strengthening freedom, justice, tolerance, cooperation and respect for the diversity of cultures and religions, because all these are important elements for building a strong foundation for international peace and security. We therefore note with satisfaction the growing worldwide interest in interreligious and intercultural dialogue and cooperation for the promotion of peace, development and human dignity.

Major international events that have taken place across the region this year reflect our concerted efforts to meet that noble objective. Such events include the Second Forum on Interfaith Dialogue for Peace, Development and Human Dignity, which was held in Waitangi, New Zealand, in May; the Third Interfaith Dialogue of the Asia-Europe Meeting, in Nanjing, China, in June; the second Global Inter-media Dialogue, held in Norway in June, and the Ministerial Meeting on Human Rights and Cultural Diversity of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Tehran in September. We also welcome the appointment by the Secretary-General of the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. These and other similar initiatives can serve as instruments for promoting peace, tolerance and mutual understanding among peoples of different cultural and religious backgrounds.

As a heterogeneous country itself, Indonesia is a firm believer in the merit of dialogue and the culture of peace. This is why we have been very active in sponsoring dialogue on interfaith cooperation at the regional, interregional and global levels. Furthermore, the Government supports the efforts of non-governmental

actors working in various areas to promote interreligious harmony.

In a country of great diversity and size, we celebrate diversity as a blessing. Our centuries-old traditions of *musyawarah* and *mufakat* — which stand for consultation and consensus, respectively — have been our way of dealing with pluralism and making it benefit everyone.

Indonesia also fully recognizes the modern tools of education in promoting harmony in diversity. With that tool, we seek to sensitize younger generations to the similarities in all religions and cultures, rather than the differences that may otherwise be used as an excuse for acrimony. In that regard, my delegation supports the recommendations in the UNESCO report, particularly the need for Member States to increase efforts at developing curricula, textbooks and activities that teach cultural and religious tolerance.

We also attach great importance to the role of the media in nurturing social harmony and my delegation supports the recommendation in the report for Member States to encourage the media to support at the international and national levels the global campaign for a culture of peace as well as dialogue among civilizations, cultures and people.

The delegation of Indonesia believes in the continued potential of such a global campaign, be it of an interreligious, intercultural or intercivilizational nature. We should applaud practical actions such as translating the shared values of peace, compassion and tolerance through the fields of education, culture, media, religion and society. These open up opportunities for us to work towards harmony and tolerance in interpersonal as well as inter-State relationships. It is in that context that my delegation looks forward to the eventual adoption, by consensus, of the draft resolution contained in document A/62/L.6.

**The Acting President**: I now call on the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

**Archbishop Migliore** (Holy See): This Organization was born out of the ashes of a world war unique in its untold outrages against the dignity of the human person. It is therefore fitting that the opening lines of the Charter enshrine the immediate link between peace and the respect for fundamental human rights.

Achievements in the field of human rights, exemplified by the core international human rights treaties, indicate that the inseparability between peace and respect for the rights and dignity of the person is now accepted as self-evident, universal and inalienable. The recognition of the existence of fundamental human rights necessarily presupposes a universal and transcendent truth about man that is not only prior to all human activity, but also determines it.

At the interpersonal level, human dignity requires that we treat all as equal to ourselves. The golden rule of doing unto others as you want others to do unto you carries the same principle of fundamental equality, which precedes and transcends all characteristics that distinguish us one from the other, be they race, culture or religion.

At the international level, this common dignity also determines the just measure of national interests. They interrelate and may never be considered absolute. In order to promote and defend them, it is not only never right to harm the legitimate interests of other States, but there is also an obligation to help promote and defend the common good of all people. Thus, respect for human dignity is the deepest ethical foundation in our search for peace and in the construction of international relations that correspond to the requirements of our common humanity. Forgetting or partially and selectively accepting this core principle is at the origin of conflicts, of environmental degradation and of social and economic injustices.

Human rights are grounded in the objective requirements of nature bestowed upon man. In this context, laws contrary to human dignity may never be passed, and progress in every field should not be measured by what is possible, but by its compatibility with human dignity. Respect for the right to life at every stage, from conception to natural death, firmly establishes the principle that life is not at anyone's disposal. Our capacity to distinguish between what we can dispose of and what we cannot is most challenged when it comes to protecting life in its most vulnerable phases. This is the rule with which to measure respect for human dignity.

It is in this continuum of the respect for life that the abolition of the death penalty should be seen. It is also within this framework that, even in the midst of war, all must respect international humanitarian law.

When, despite every effort, war does break out, the essential principles of humanity must be safeguarded, and norms of conduct must be established to limit the damage as much as possible and minimize the suffering of civilians and of all the victims of conflicts.

In the same manner that the right to life cannot be disposed of at will, the right to religious freedom cannot be subject to human caprice. In this regard, the difficulties that many followers of various religions still frequently encounter in freely exercising their right to religious freedom is a disturbing symptom of a lack of peace. Not only are they prevented from publicly exercising this right, but they are actually persecuted and subjected to violence in some places. A fundamental human right is violated, with serious repercussions for peaceful coexistence, when a State imposes a single religion upon everyone, prohibiting all others, or when a secular system denigrates religious beliefs and denies public space to religion.

On their part, religions are called on to work for peace and to foster reconciliation among peoples. Faced with a world lacerated by conflict, religions must never become a vehicle of hatred, and can never justify evil and violence while invoking the name of God.

The Charter calls on this Organization to exercise leadership in the promotion of human rights. In doing so, it must not lose sight of the principle that these rights are held to be true, not because a decision-making body says so, but because they flow from the inalienable dignity of every human person.

**The Acting President**: We have heard the last speaker on the debate on this item. Before concluding, I would like to inform members that, at the request of the sponsors, action on draft resolution A/62/L.6 will be taken at a later date to be announced.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 49.

*The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.*